

“Consumer Tips for Safe Food Handling Techniques” and “A Cleaner Cooking Environment”

Shopping for foods:

- When shopping, do the grocery shopping last and take food straight home to the refrigerator. *Never leave food in a hot car!*
- Shop for meat, poultry and seafood last and place in plastic bags to keep the packages from dripping from other foods in the cart.
- Do not sample raw fruits and vegetables because you do not know where these products were harvested or packaged.
- Buy frozen and refrigerated foods just before checkout.
- Feel frozen foods to make sure they are rock solid.
- Choose canned foods that are free of dents, cracks, rust or bulging lids; check packages for holes, tears and open corners.
- Do not buy food in poor condition (e.g., refrigerated foods should be cold to the touch, frozen foods should be frozen solid, cans should be free of dents or bulges).
- Purchase dated packages only if the “sell by” date has not expired.
- Do not buy foods that you will not use before the “use-by” date.
- Buy products labeled “keep refrigerated” only if they are stored in the refrigerator case and feel cold to the touch.
- Bring a cooler for groceries if time from the store to home will be longer than 30 minutes. Even short stops in hot weather may let groceries warm up to unsafe temperatures.

Storing foods:

- Check the temperature of the refrigerator and keep the refrigerator as cold as possible with freezing your dairy products or produce. Keep the refrigerator at 40°F or less.
- Freeze fresh meat, poultry and fish immediately if you do not plan to use them within a few days. Overwrap packages with aluminum foil or heavy freezer wrap to make airtight.
- Wrap raw meat, poultry and fish or place in separate plastic bags and set on a plate on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator to keep from dripping onto other foods.
- Use refrigerated steaks, roasts, deli meats and poultry within 3 to 4 days. Ground meat, ground poultry and fish should be used with 1 to 2 days.
- Space items in the refrigerator and freezer so air can freely circulate.
- Follow the “use by”, “keep refrigerated” and “safe handling” information non-package labels. If you cannot remember when food was placed in the refrigerator throw it out.
- Pack perishables in iced coolers when cleaning or defrosting your refrigerator or freezer.

- Do not store onions and potatoes together because gases from onions make potatoes rot.
- Do not store food under sinks because it might get tainted by cleaning supplies or water.
- Accumulated paper and grocery bags can be hangouts for rodents and bugs.
- Flour bugs might be repulsive, but they probably will not make you sick. Insects such as flies and cockroaches can spread bacteria.

Thawing or defrosting foods:

- DO NOT thaw foods on the kitchen counter.
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator, under cold water changed every 30 minutes, or in the microwave oven. Cook microwave-defrosted food immediately after thawing.
- Defrost meat in the lowest location in the refrigerator to avoid cross-contamination.

General kitchen hygiene:

- Maintain clean surfaces throughout. This includes floors, walls, ceilings, counters and appliances.
- Do not let food residues *dry onto* the dishes. Get into the habit of washing dishes immediately after meals.
- Kitchen cloths and towels can spread bacteria, so launder them frequently, especially after cleaning up raw animal products. Replace sponges every few weeks. Consider using disposable paper towels.
- Let dishes air-dry because bacteria can be introduced onto the clean dish from damp towels.
- Clean behind major appliances at least every 6 months.
- Do not put things that are handled a lot but not washed (i.e., playing cards) in the same drawer as utensils.
- **DO NOT COOK FOR OTHERS WHEN YOU ARE ILL!!!**

Handling and preparing foods prior to cooking:

- Wash hands in hot soapy water for at least 20 seconds *before* preparing food or *after* using the bathroom, changing diapers or handling pets.
- To reduce bacteria in sponges, wash clothes and kitchen towels wash them often.
- Cover any cuts or sores on your hands with a bandage, or use plastic gloves, if available.
- Turn your face away and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue if you sneeze or cough while preparing food and always wash hands afterwards.
- Keep everything that touches food clean (e.g., knives, cutting boards, utensils).
- If possible, use clean utensils instead of hands to prepare food.
- Keep raw meat, poultry and fish and their juices away from other foods, especially on knives, cutting boards and platters.

- Never chop fresh vegetables or salad ingredients on a cutting board that was previously used for raw meat without being washed. If possible, designate separate cutting boards for raw animal products vs. raw vegetable products.
- Scrub cutting boards with hot soapy water. Rinse and sanitize with a tepid solution of bleach and water (3/8 oz. bleach per gallon of water). Air-dry and store dry.
- Thoroughly wash all fruits and vegetables. A few drops of bleach may extend the shelf life of the produce. Refrigerate melons after they are cut.
- Use a covered non-metallic container to marinate meat, poultry and seafood. Place it in the refrigerator, not on the kitchen counter. Discard the leftover marinade that was in contact with the raw meat or bring it to a rolling boil for 1 minute before using on cooked meat.
- Thoroughly rinse poultry and seafood in cold water and check for any off odors before cooking.
- Avoid stuffing poultry. Cook dressing separately. The opportunity for incomplete cooking because of the density of the filled bird lends itself to incubation temperatures for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* growth.

Cooking:

- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm, not runny. Do not use or modify recipes that call for uncooked or partially cooked eggs.
- Do not eat raw cookie dough or taste any meat, poultry, and fish or egg dish while it is raw or partially cooked. Never drink unpasteurized milks or milk products.
- Cook ground beef until not longer pink.
- Beef roasts and steaks should be well-browned on the surface, but the interior will be slightly pink when cooked to 145°F (medium rare).
- When basting grilled meats, brush sauce on cooked surfaces only. Be careful not to contaminate fully cooked meats by reusing leftover marinade or adding sauce with a brush previously used on raw meats. Bring marinades to a rolling boil for 1 minute for safe use on cooked meats.
- Stir, rotate and cover foods when microwaving for even cooking.
- Cook red meat to 160° F. Cook poultry to 180° F. Use a meat thermometer.
- To check visually, red meat is done when it's brown or gray inside; poultry juices run clear; fish flakes with a fork.
- *Salmonella*, bacteria which causes food poisoning, may be found in some eggs. Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm, not runny. Scramble eggs to a firm texture. Do not use recipes that call for raw or partially cooked eggs.
- When cooking ahead, divide large portions of food into small, shallow containers for refrigeration to ensure safe, rapid cooling.
- When cooking with slow cookers, start with fresh meat rather than frozen meat. Use chunks rather than whole roasts or large cuts. Be sure the recipe includes a liquid.
- Never partially cook foods, store them, and then finish grilling or roasting them later.
- Roast meat or poultry in oven temperatures of 325°F or above. Avoid "cooking without a heat source" (preheating oven, putting in roast then turning off oven).

- Use a meat thermometer. Place the thermometer in the thickest portion of the meat, not touching bone, fat or the bottom of the pan.
- **(CHART)**

Cooking Temperatures (Fahrenheit)	
Product	Temperature (°F)
Eggs & Egg Dishes	
Eggs	Cook until yolk & white are firm
Egg dishes	160
Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures	
Turkey, chicken	170
Veal, beef, lamb, pork	160
Fresh Beef	
Rare	140
Medium	160
Well Done	170
Fresh Veal	
Medium	160
Well Done	170
Fresh Lamb	
Medium	160
Well Done	170
Fresh Pork	
Medium	160
Well Done	170
Poultry	
Chicken, whole	180
Turkey, whole	180
Poultry, breasts	170
Poultry, thighs, wings	Cook until juices run clear
Suffffing (cooked alone or in bird)	165
Duck & Goose	180
Ham	
Fresh (raw)	160
Pre-cooked (to reheat)	140

Egg safety:

- Do not eat raw or lightly cooked eggs. Many older cookbooks have recipes that call for raw eggs (e.g., ice cream, cookie dough, mayonnaise, eggnog). These recipes are no longer recommended because of the risk of Salmonella. The commercial versions of these products are made of pasteurized eggs and are not a food hazard.
- Discard cracked or dirty eggs.
- Keep eggs refrigerated and eat promptly after cooking. Do not keep eggs, or egg-based foods or sauces warm for more than two hours.

Safe microwaving:

- Cover food with a lid or plastic wrap so steam can aid through cooking. Vent wrap and make sure it does not touch the food.
- Stir and rotate food for even cooking.
- Observe the standing time called for in the recipe or package direction to allow foods to finish cooking.

Serving foods:

- NEVER leave foods out over two hours.
- Use clean dishes and utensils to serve food, not those used in preparation.
- Pack lunches in insulated carriers with a cold pack.
- Keep cold party food on ice or serve it throughout the gathering from platters from the refrigerator.
- Divide hot party food into smaller serving portions. Keep platters refrigerated until time to warm them up for serving.

Leftovers:

- Refrigerate cooked, perishable food as soon as possible within two hours after cooking. Date leftovers so they can be used within 2 to 3 days. *"If in doubt, throw it out!"*
- Divide large portions into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- With poultry or other stuffed meats remove stuffing and refrigerate in separate containers.
- Freeze leftovers that will not be eaten within a few days.
- Cover and reheat leftovers to 165°F throughout or until steaming hot. Stir foods while reheating to ensure that all foods reach the appropriate temperature. Reheat sauces, soups and gravies to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute before serving.
- Never taste leftover food that looks or smells strange – discard it!
- Moldy foods should be discarded and not merely trimmed off because toxins produced by some molds may be found under the surface of the foods.

Reheating:

- Bring sauces, soups, and gravy to a boil. Heat other leftovers to 165° F.
- Microwave leftovers using a lid or vented plastic wrap for thorough heating.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HANDLING BABY'S FOOD SAFELY

General considerations:

- If the baby does not finish a bottle, do not put it back in the refrigerator for another time because bacteria from a baby's mouth can be introduced into food or bottles where it can grow and multiply even after refrigeration and reheating.
- Do not feed a baby from a jar of baby food and put it back in the refrigerator for another time because saliva on the spoon contaminates the remaining food.
- Perishable items like milk, formula or food left out of the refrigerator or without a cold source for more than 2 hours should not be used.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for preparing bottles before filling with formula or milk. Observe "Use-by" dates on formula cans.
- Those interested in health foods may consider using **honey** as a sweetener to entice babies to drink water from a bottle. Honey is not safe for children less than a year old. It can contain the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum* that could cause illness or death.
- Raw or unpasteurized milk should not be served to infants and children.
- If making homemade baby food, use a brush to clean areas around the blender blades or food processor parts. Old food particles can harbor harmful bacteria that may contaminate other foods.
- Use detergent and hot water to wash and rinse all utensils (including the can opener) which come in contact with baby's foods.
- If using **commercial baby foods**, check to see if the safety button on the lid is down. If the jar lid doesn't "pop" when opened, do not use. Discard jars with chipped glass or rusty lids.
- To freeze homemade baby food, put the mixture in an ice cube tray. Cover with heavy-duty plastic wrap until the food is frozen. Then pop food cubes into a freezer bag or airtight container and date it. Store up to 3 months. One cube equals one serving. Small jars can also be used for freezing. Leave about 1/2 inch of space at the top because food expands when frozen.
- Do not save leftover food or milk that a baby does not finish.

Traveling with baby:

- Transport bottles and food in an insulated cooler. Place the ice chest in the passenger compartment of the car, not in the trunk. Use frozen gel packs to keep food or bottles cold on long outings.
- Do not keep bottles or food in the same bag with dirty diapers.

SAFE STORAGE OF BABY FOOD

Don't leave baby food solids or liquids out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

LIQUIDS:

	<u>Refrigerator</u>	<u>Freezer</u>
Expressed breast milk	5 days	3 to 4 months
Formula	2 days	not recommended
Whole milk	5 days	3 months
Reconstituted evaporated milk	3 to 5 days	not recommended

SPECIAL HANDLING:

For shelf storage of unopened cans of formula, observe "Use by" dates printed on containers. Store evaporated milk up to 12 months. Heat liquid in disposable bottles in hot tap water, not in the microwave. If heating glass or hard plastic bottles in the microwave, remove the cap and nipple first. Shake bottle before testing the temperature on top of your hand. Discard any unused milk left in a bottle.

SOLIDS:

	<u>Refrigerator</u>	<u>Freezer</u>
Strained fruits and vegetables	2 to 3 days	6 to 8 months
Strained meats and eggs	1 day	1 to 2 months
Meat/vegetable combinations	1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months
Homemade baby foods	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months

SPECIAL HANDLING:

Observe "Use by" date for shelf storage of unopened jars. Check to see that the safety button in lid is down. If the jar lid does not "pop" when opened or is not sealed safely, do not use. Do not heat meats, meat sticks, eggs or jars of food in the microwave. Transfer food from jars to bowls or heating dish. For 4 ounces of food, microwave on high 15 seconds; stir and let stand 30 seconds.

Stir and test the temperature of the foods before feeding baby. Don't feed a baby from the jar.

Holding Foods During and/or Following a Power Outage

Freezer:

- Without power, a full upright or chest freezer will keep foods frozen for about 2 days. A half-full freezer will keep food frozen 1 day.
- If power is only out temporarily, foods will last longer by keeping the door shut as much as possible.
- If power will be off for an extended period of time, take the food to a friend's freezer, find a commercial freezer or use dry ice.

Refrigerator-Freezer combination:

- Without power, the refrigerator section will keep food cool 4-6 hours depending on the kitchen temperature.
- A full, well functioning freezer should keep food frozen for 2 days, half-full freezer 1 day.
- Block ice can keep food on the refrigerator shelves cooler. Dry ice can be added to the freezer unit.

Thawed foods:

- Foods still containing ice crystals or that feel refrigerator-cold can be refrozen.
- Discard foods that reach room temperature and remained there 2 or more hours.
- Immediately discard anything with a strange color or odor.

Summer cooking and grilling out

Shopping and storing foods:

- Keep chicken and other meats in bags separate from fruits and vegetables and other foods.
- Do not thaw poultry and meats at room temperature on the kitchen counter.
- Thaw in the refrigerator, under cold running water or in the microwave.
- Refrigerate meat at 4° C (39° F) or less within a half-hour of purchase.
- Store on lowest refrigerator shelf away from contact with other foods.
- Dairy products should also be refrigerated as soon as possible after purchase.
- Never leave food out for more than two hours.
- Marinate meats and poultry in the refrigerator not on the counter.
- Make sure foods such as potato and pasta salads are kept refrigerated prior to mealtime.

Grill-Side:

- Ensure meats such as hamburger, poultry, pork and fish are cooked. Meats should reach an internal temperature of 68° C (155° F) or higher and poultry should reach an internal temperature of 74° C (165° F) or higher. In poultry, the juices should run clear.
- Never brush marinade on your cooking meats with the last 6 minutes of cooking and do not take the leftover marinade to the table for further dipping – **DISCARD**.
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly. If there is any doubt how long the food has been unrefrigerated play it safe and discard it.

Cleanliness Counts:

- To avoid contamination, be sure to use two plates and two pairs of tongs at the grill: one set for raw meats and one set for cooked.
- Wash and sanitize counter tops, cutting boards, utensils and sinks after contact with raw meats and poultry. Use hot soapy water to wash surfaces, rinse thoroughly, and sanitize using water containing household bleach.
- Remember... wash your hands frequently after using the toilet, before preparing foods and after handling raw meat. Because bacteria thrive in kitchen towels, sponges and washcloths, wash them often in hot water.

Useful tips for cleaning out the refrigerator

How to clean out a refrigerator:

- Take out all removable parts and wash with warm water and mild soap or detergent. Rinse and dry.
- Wash walls with a solution of two tablespoons of baking soda to one quart warm water. Rinse thoroughly and dry.
- Wash gasket and door liner with warm water and mild soap or detergent. Rinse well and dry.
- For refrigerators with removable drain plugs, remove plug and force warm water mixed with baking soda through the drain. (A meat baster works well).
- Wipe down jars, bottles and containers before returning to the refrigerator.
- The defrost drip pan underneath the refrigerator is out of sight, so special effort must be made to clean it. Remove it and thoroughly wash with warm, soapy water.
- Vacuum condenser coils two to six times per year (more often in homes with pets).

What causes odors in refrigerators?

- Foods stored or wrapped improperly
- Poor maintenance – spills not wiped up right away
- Foods left in refrigerator too long
- Power or mechanical failure that causes food spoilage
- Cleaning agents which leave a strong chemical or fragrant odor

Different ways to remove odors:

- Wash interior walls thoroughly with a solution of two tbsps. of baking soda to one quart warm water.
- Pour box of baking soda in jelly-roll pan and place on shelves to absorb odors.
- Buy activated charcoal (available at pet stores and hardware stores), spread onto jelly-roll pans, and place on shelves inside the running refrigerator.
- Place freshly ground coffee in cereal bowls inside the running refrigerator for several days. A slight coffee odor may remain but will disappear after washing the inside of the refrigerator.
- While the refrigerator is running, pack each refrigerator shelf with crumpled newspaper. Set a cup of water on the top shelf, of sprinkle the newspapers lightly with water. This method takes five to six days, but strong odors will be eliminated.

There are several commercial products available for odor removal. Some may not rid the odor, but simply mask it while others are not safe for use around food. Read product labels carefully to determine if a cleaner or deodorizer is safe to use in a refrigerator; then follow instructions for use carefully. Some products are specially formulated to clean the inside of a refrigerator, such as the "Great Results"™ Refrigerator Cleaner by Whirlpool.

How to prevent odor problems:

- Discard refrigerator leftovers, vegetables and dairy products that are beyond safekeeping. They can create odor problems if left too long.
- Promptly wipe up any spills that occur.
- Clean refrigerator out every two weeks.

Pest Control

- Integrated pest management starts with:
 1. Identifying the presence of pests
 2. Preventing the entrance of pests
 3. Good housekeeping to eliminate food, water and hiding places
 4. Limiting the numbers of pests through the use of pest control products
- Invest in covered garbage cans
- Cover and frequently remove stored garbage and recyclables. Lighten up the room with reflective surfaces.
- Start a cleaning routine.
- Do not let soiled laundry remain on the floor. Use washable hampers and do laundry frequently.
- Dispose of diaper waste in the toilet. Appropriately wrap all disposable diapers before disposal. Remove diapers frequently. Thoroughly wash your hands after diapering.
- Keep your dog/cat clean, groomed and healthy. Remove all yard droppings and clean the cat litter daily. Dispose of this waste appropriately. Provide the recommended immunizations for your pet.

CATERING FOR LARGE PARTIES AT HOME

It is becoming all too familiar to hear of guests at private parties being taken ill with food poisoning. Sometimes food prepared in the home has been taken somewhere else to be eaten, such as the village hall, community center, or social club where the function is being held. What should have been a happy occasion for everyone can turn out to be just the opposite for some.

Food poisoning is a miserable and potentially dangerous experience. It is your responsibility to ensure that your food does not make the guests ill. If it does, you run the risk of spoiling the function and alienating your friends. You also need to take extra care with people coming to the party who are especially vulnerable, for example, young children, pregnant women, the elderly and anyone who is ill.

Which foods do I need to take special care over?

A very wide range of foods can cause food poisoning if not handled properly. Raw poultry, and occasionally raw eggs, may contain food poisoning bacteria, and are often associated with food poisoning outbreaks. Meat and meat products, and fish and shellfish have similarly been identified as culprits when illness has struck. Sauces and desserts like mousses and home-made ice creams, which may contain eggs which have not been cooked, may cause problems too. Likewise you also need to be careful with raw salads and vegetables which do not undergo any further process before they are eaten. Many foods can be a source of food poisoning bacteria - proper precautions must be taken in preparing them.

What are the most common faults?

Some of the most common faults that may lead to poisoning are: poor storage;
cold foods not kept cold enough or hot foods hot enough; inadequate cooking;
cross-contamination.

Storage

Large functions mean large quantities of cooked and uncooked food competing for limited amounts of fridge and freezer space. **Inappropriate storage** is one of the most common faults reported as contributing to food poisoning outbreaks. Food is often left unrefrigerated for prolonged periods. Domestic refrigerators are not designed to cope with the large amounts of food prepared in the home for parties.

- Before you take on a task of catering for large numbers from home, make sure you've got the refrigerator and freezer capacity needed to keep food cool and safe.
- Keep raw meats or defrosting food, which may drip at the bottom of the refrigerator, below any cooked foods. Also protect the salad tray from any dripping food items.
- Keep cooked and uncooked food separate.
- Don't clutter the refrigerator up with wines, beers and soft drinks. Keep them in separate ice buckets, cool bags or cold water to maximize available refrigerator space for perishable items.

Temperature Control

It is also important to keep perishable food in the refrigerator, particularly in mild weather because bacteria grow quickly at temperatures above 10°C. Remember:

- The coldest part of your refrigerator should be kept between 0°C and 5°C (32-41°F). Use a refrigerator thermometer to check the temperature.
- Don't overload your refrigerator. The efficiency of the refrigerator will suffer if the cooling air circulating cannot flow freely.
- Keep the refrigerator door closed as much as possible.
- Prepare foods that need to be refrigerated last. Don't leave it standing around at room temperature.
- Cooked foods which need to be chilled should be cooled as quickly as possible. Do not put food in the refrigerator until it has cooled because it will raise the interior temperature of the refrigerator. To cool hot food quickly, place the food in a clean, sealable container, and put it under a running cold water tap or in a basin of cold water. Also, make full use of ice packs in cool bags. Where practical, reduce cooling times by limiting size of food items or dividing food items into smaller amounts.

Once prepared, **getting the food to the catered event** can be a problem. This can be particularly difficult when there are large quantities of perishable food involved.

- Use coolers. Once there, are facilities adequate for keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold? Adequate refrigerator and oven capacity at the place where the function is being held is just as important as in the home.

Cooking

Cook foods thoroughly - making sure that the temperature at the center reaches at least 160° F for at least two minutes - is the key to reducing harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning. Large portions of meat or whole poultry need special care.

- Make sure meat and poultry are fully thawed before cooking. The best way to thaw food is either in the refrigerator or by microwaving.
- Make sure that the center is well cooked. Cook until the juices run clear. Use a meat thermometer if possible.
- Domestic ovens may not have the capacity to handle the amounts of food needed to be cooked for functions, particularly if large joints of meat and whole poultry are involved. Make sure cooked food is not reheated more than once. Always heat until piping hot all the way through.
- Don't be tempted to cut cooking times just because people are waiting to eat. This is particularly important when microwaving or barbecuing.
- Take proper care with left-overs. Throw away any perishable food that has been standing at room temperature for more than a couple of hours and all food scraps.
- Store left-overs in clean, covered containers in the refrigerator and eat within 48 hours.

Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination (spreading bacteria from foods yet to be cooked, or from pets, hands, dirty cloths on to prepared food) can play an important part in food poisoning outbreaks.

Cooking for large numbers can mean large numbers of people in the kitchen at the same time. There are likely to be greater quantities of food, raw and cooked. Larger numbers of pots, pans, plates and utensils being used. More washing up. Greater problems keeping work tops clean. There are certain basic rules which will help reduce the scope for cross-contamination.

- Prepare raw and cooked food separately.
- Don't use the same knife or chopping board for raw meat, cooked food and raw fruit or vegetables unless they are cleaned thoroughly in hot soapy water between uses.
- Wash dishes, worktops and cutlery with hot water and detergent.
- Keep your hands clean at all times. Always wash them in hot soapy water before touching food, after using the toilet, or touching pets, dirty washing or the dustbin. Hands should also be washed frequently whilst preparing food, especially between handling raw and cooked foods.
- Keep dishcloths clean and change tea towels and hand towels frequently.
- Make sure, if you have any cut or grazes on exposed areas, that these are kept covered with a waterproof dressing. Don't wipe your hands on the tea towel. Use a separate kitchen towel.

- Keep anyone who is, or has recently been, ill with diarrhea or vomiting out of the kitchen, even if they're not handling food.

Vulnerable groups

Take extra care if babies, toddlers, pregnant women, or anyone who is ill are attending the party as food poisoning bacteria can make them very ill.

- These groups should avoid using raw (unpasteurised) milk. This milk has not been heat-treated and may therefore contain organisms harmful to health.
- Make sure there are alternatives to pate and soft ripened cheeses like Brie, Camembert and blue-vein types for pregnant women and anyone with a low resistance to infection.

Big parties mean big responsibilities!

Don't take chances with people's health. If you haven't got the facilities to cater safely for functions from home, don't do it. Catering from home for large parties brings with it problems which the domestic cook doesn't generally face.

- Large parties mean large quantities of food. You must make sure there is enough refrigerator and freezer space to cope. Is your oven large enough for the job you're asking it to do?

How will you cope with the extra people in the kitchen, the extra clutter, more dirty dishes, plates, utensils and messier worktops?

- Make sure that you and your helpers understand the need for good hygiene practice.

Checklist:

Catering from home for large parties

Catering from home for large functions is not something to be taken on lightly. Large amounts of food need to be prepared in advance and store appropriately prior to consumption. If not done properly the risk of food poisoning is increased. You need to plan ahead and think carefully about food safety. If you're thinking of catering for larger than usual numbers, here are some key Do's and Don'ts.

Plan carefully

- DON'T make foods too far in advance.
- DO make sure you've got enough fridge and freezer space. Enlist the help of friends and neighbors to ensure you have the capacity you need.
- DON'T leave food standing around for several hours in a warm room before it is eaten.
- DO take special care with vulnerable groups.

Proper temperature control is essential

- DO make sure that perishable food is kept chilled. This means cold meats, quiches, desserts etc. Keep the most perishable foods in the coldest part of the refrigerator.
- DO store refrigerated cooked food above raw, in case there are any drips.
- DO make sure that food is cooked thoroughly. Large portions of meat and whole poultry need special care to insure the center is well cooked. DON'T reheat foods more than once.
- DO keep hot food hot and cold food cold.

Avoid contaminating prepared food

- DON'T let raw foods, like meat and poultry, or unwashed fruit, vegetables and salads, come into contact with food that is ready to eat.
- DO wash your hands thoroughly before touching foods and handling raw foods like meat and poultry.

DON'T use raw eggs in uncooked foods (e.g., chocolate mousse, cake icing and homemade mayonnaise). Use pasteurized eggs or commercial mayonnaise.

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